DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 665 JC 840 008

AUTHOR Rasor, Richard A.; And Others
TITLE Instructional Program Review: A Mini-Accreditation Approach to Self-Evaluation in Community Colleges.
INSTITUTION American River Coll., Sacramento, CA.
PUB DATE Oct 83
NOTE 26p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Planning; Community Colleges; Departments; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Organizational Objectives; *Program Evaluation; *Self Evaluation (Groups); Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Program review is essential for long-range planning, financial accountability, and self-validation. One option for dealing with the limitations of many program review models is a mini-accreditation approach to assess the extent of goal attainment within a broad category of activities or outcomes. All members of the department being reviewed should be involved in the accomplishment of the following steps: (1) identify the goals and objectives of the department/program; (2) translate goals/objectives into observable and measurable outcomes; (3) collect data relative to goals/objectives; (4) assess the success of goal attainment based on the data collected; (5) write a self-evaluation report which describes, appraises, and presents a plan of action for each goal; and (6) arrange for a team of evaluators from other departments or outside the school to review the self-evaluation report and make an on-site visit. Data elements which must be part of the departmental self-evaluation are departmental history and forecasts for the subject matter, duplication of programs at nearby institutions, enrollment trends, departmental costs, student characteristics and opinions, academic standards, grades, retention, job placement data, consumers' opinions of program completers, professional growth/achievement of staff, curriculum, texts, and adequacy of support functions. A comprehensive review by each department builds a foundation for accreditation and institutional goal setting. (LAL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Rasor

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED239665

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW: A MINI—ACCREDITATION APPROACH TO SELF—EVALUATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Developed by:

Richard A. Rasor
Research Coordinator
American River College

Revised October, 1983

In conjunction with

Robert Jensen, President
Sharon Ruckle, Asst. Dean Research & Development

Approved by American River College
Task Force on Program Review

JC 840 008

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW:
A MINI-ACCREDITATION APPROACH
TO SELF-EVALUATION IN
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Developed by:

Richard A. Rasor

Research Coordinator

American River College

In Conjunction with

Robert Jensen, President

Sharon Ruckle, Asst. Dean Research & Development

Approved by American River College Task Force

on Program Review

October, 1983

In an age of increasing accountability, it is imperative that evaluative procedures of academic programs not only be valid but flexible enough to be used in a variety of academic contexts and still be sensitive to the uniqueness of a unit.

Why is program review needed? The bottom line answer is that program evaluation is being called for by district boards, the Board of Governors, and legislators. Presumably, in a short time such evaluation will be mandatory for all programs. Additionally, there are three basic reasons why program review is essential:

1. To do intelligent long-range planning. Admittedly, some planning will always be of the emergency, reactive-type depending upon sudden enrollment and financial changes. This can be lessened, however, by continuous ongoing data collection which shows in a historical sense, long range growth potential for the program or department being evaluated. Failing to produce such data can result in intuitive evaluation--certainly far less objective and possibly far less accurate. If a program is to be expanded, reduced, or even eliminated, it is best to have multiple sources of evidence for backing such decisions.

2. To give accountability of expenditures and establish financial needs. Any public organization must be answerable for its financial decisions. In the case of community colleges, the general public is entitled to know what the tax dollar buys. Likewise, the college with ongoing program review is in a proactive position to convince the public of future financial priorities.

3. To self validate. Evaluation is at the heart of change and individual growth. Admittedly, looking carefully at oneself and what is collectively done can be ego threatening. Part of that threat has often been unnecessarily increased by the way some program review procedures were conducted. For example, in reviewing the literature and selected other program evaluation models used in community colleges, several limitations are apparent with many of them.

1. Evaluation was overly intuitive - often based solely upon opinions of personnel who were part of the program being evaluated.
2. Evaluation was excessively quantative. One such review evaluated university faculty by giving numerical weights to page length of publications, ordinal position of authorship, status of the journal, etc. Such quantative data were then summed and transformed into a single standardized score. Admittedly, quantative analysis (e.g., WSCH) is part of a review process, but the total evaluative worth of people and programs cannot be adequately described by simplistic reduction to a number.
3. Evaluation was too concerned with ease of retrieving data often at the expense of overlooking other valuable information. Collecting only data which are routinely gathered and stored in computers, e.g., WSCH, class size, drop rates, etc., leads evaluators into ignoring less retrievable but useful data, e.g., opinions of matriculated

students who majored in the program and are now actively employed.

4. Evaluation was too authoritarian and unilateral.

   Meaningful conclusions should not be reached until all sectors of the program being evaluated have had input. Not soliciting opinions of staff is doomed to make program evaluation a hated process. Likewise, having one management person process all the retrieved information and write the report is also not apt to enjoy wide appeal.

5. Evaluation has often been done on an urgent basis, e.g., at budget time or when there is a decision crisis. The evaluative process needs to be ongoing and become a routine part of academic life.

6. Evaluation has lacked commitment. Too often it has been used as an "add on" reserved for a few programs. Likewise, staff are not apt to take evaluation very seriously if there are no consequences.

7. Evaluation has been overly identified with "cutback" in many schools.

   Any evaluative process should be started as a means of improving programs. It is not likely that members of a department being evaluated will cooperatively provide valid data used in a manner which suggests elimination or cut back of their own program. The intent is to look for "things to reward and encourage" rather than "things to punish."

Mini-Accreditation: An Overview of the Process

The mini-accreditation approach to the program review process assesses the extent of goal attainment within a broad category of activities or outcomes that will be referred to as "data elements." Some of these data elements are mandatory within this approach, while other outcomes are voluntary.

A department (or program) is the preferred unit for evaluation. If too small, several departments can be simultaneously reviewed while still retaining discipline individuality in terms of summary data. The frequency of departmental/program review can fluctuate depending upon previous evaluative outcomes and community needs. A reasonable figure would be every four years. A program review calendar is to be developed by the instructional office. The members of a department are collectively charged with accomplishing the following program review steps:

Step 1. Identify the goals and objectives of the department/program.

Step 2. Translate those goals/objectives into observable and measurable outcomes.

Step 3. Collect data relative to the stated goals/objectives as well as any other required elements.

Step 4. Draw inferences from all data collected and assess success of goal attainment.

Step 5. Write a self-evaluation report in terms of description, appraisal, and plan of action for each goal and required data element.

Step 6. Help arrange for an outside team to review the department's self-evaluation report and make an on-site visitation. (The outside team will also write a cover report of their own.)

Here are some general suggestions for getting the process started:

Every member in the department (including support staff) is involved with program review. The department chairperson (program director or an elected departmental faculty member) and the administrative dean closest to the discipline assume major responsibility for organization, assigning sub-committees, establishing time lines, and selecting data gathering instruments/procedures. Basically, the approach involves reviewing the following:

1. What has the department been trying to accomplish? (Description)
2. How well has the department accomplished those tasks? (Appraisal)
3. What changes are to be made, if any? (Plan of action)

Thus, the process includes description, appraisal, and a plan of action for every element of review--both those elements relating to goals plus those required but which are not a part of the stated goals. The final self-evaluation report is a summary somewhere in the range of 20-30 pages. In addition, an appendix is to contain supportive summary data and may run into as many pages as are necessary to substantiate the various conclusions reached in the self-evaluation report. Original or raw data which calculate into summary data are kept available but are <u>not</u> a part of the self-evaluation report.

The big task is collecting, summarizing, and determining what all the data suggest. Have goals been met? What shall be the department's response to the required data elements even though these may not be a part of the stated goals? What are the department's plans of action to improve its own program? The complete self-evaluation report is then duplicated with copies sent to members of the external visiting team at least two weeks before their visit on campus. Recommendations from staff are to be solicited for names of people who can be invited by the dean of instruction as members of the external visiting team. The external team's cover report (plus any rebuttals to it) and the self-evaluation report are bound into a complete package, duplicated and distributed to the president, dean of instruction, the discipline's respective dean and members of the department.

External Evaluation Team

This team is charged with validating the self-evaluation report and writing a brief summary report with observations and recommendations. The team may call for additional information, interview personnel, and have access to all course-related records. Neither the self-evaluation report nor the team's final report shall use names of personnel nor divulge what would normally be confidential information. Nevertheless, the team is responsible for writing a candid report summarizing the department's strengths, weaknesses, and directions for the future. If their report is highly critical, the team may recommend another evaluation be done before the customary four years.

Specific membership of the evaluating team is partially determined by cost factors and availability of people. In any event, the team should be adequately independent of and external to the department or program being evaluated. Several options, combinations and number of personnel are possible beyond the four recommended below:

Option 1. Most External - Transfer Program

One faculty member from an allied department within the same school. (This individual would know the local idiosyncracies and could function as team leader.)

One member with the same department identity (or subject matter) from a four-year college.

One faculty member with the same department identity (or subject matter) from another community college.

One private citizen.

One member of management from another school.

One high school teacher with same or similar subject matter identity.

Option 2. Least External - Transfer Program

One faculty member from an allied department within the same school. (This individual would function as team leader.)

One member of management, same school.

Four faculty members, same school.

Option 3. Most External - Occupation Program

One faculty member from an allied department within the same school. (This individual would know the local

idiosyncrasies and could function as team leader.)

One faculty member with the same department identity (or subject matter) from another community college.

One member of management from another school.

One high school teacher with same or similar subject matter identity.

Two private citizens representing consumers of occupational students.

Option 4. Least External - Occupational Program

One faculty member from an allied department within the same school. (This individual would function as team leader.)

One member of management, same school.

Three faculty members, same school.

One private citizen representing consumers of occupational students.

Setting Goals/Objectives

The mini-accreditation approach conceptualizes a department/program and its respective curriculum as a "treatment" activity upon students. In other words, what effect does this treatment have upon students in terms of pre-to-post-period changes or compared against other students who have never had such experiences? Such treatment activities then become the basis for goals and objectives of the department. For example, a department may wish to specify a goal as preparing students for direct entry into a specific vocation. The treatment in this case would be all the activities that make for "preparation."

Logically feeding into the department's goals (but not restricting them) are the specific goals/objectives/criteria for each course within the department's curriculum. How did students change as a result of taking a particular course? Such course goals/objectives are specifically stated along with measurable criteria. Table 1 (pages 22 and 23) Student Outcome Behavorial Objectives, is an edited example from Miami-Dade Community College District. Once the courses have measurable objectives, the department's goals come into sharper focus. For example, assume that a communications department has but four courses; speaking, reading, listening, and writing, each with objectives and specific criteria (see Table 1). Collectively then, a departmental goal might be to improve communication skills in students who experience such course work. Of course, not all departmental goals need be tied to course goals/objectives. Furthermore, specific course objectives, while establishing a common thread across instructors who teach such classes, must also allow for teacher individuality in terms of additional objectives and methods of achieving objectives.

The departmental goals and objectives are determined by the staff members within the framework of the college's goals and objectives and given final approval by the dean of instruction. It is up to those who apply the treatment activities to determine their expectations. Of course, such goals must be consistent with the institution's broader goals. Statements may be developed such as "The program develops in students the skills for mastering

upper division college work," or "The in-class computer results in greater student learning." Thus, the first step within this section involves identifying such goals largely in conceptual terms. The second step is to produce measurable definitions or criteria for answering the question, How can we tell whether the goals and objectives of the treatment have been achieved? What observable and measurable behaviors will be performed if these objectives have been met? What behaviors will be seen if the objectives have not been met? Usually such behavioral definitions use action verbs such as identify, distinguish, describe, name, state a rule, order, demonstrate, construct, apply a rule, or interpret. Such verbs specify something in behavioral terms which suggest "doing" rather than "knowing." Words indicating "knowing," "appreciating," or "understanding" are not action verbs, and they suggest conclusions which can only be reached inferentially from the study of behavior.

Finally, the last preparatory step involves selecting valid tests, rating instruments, and procedures to measure the attainment of goals and objectives. Such measures must reflect accurately upon the treatment activity and must be representative of skills, competencies and other criteria which a program or department has set for itself. The usual methods are given in Table 2 (See page 24).

Listed on the next few pages are thirteen <u>required</u> data elements. Such required data may or may not already be included as goals/objectives but must be a part of the department's self-

evaluation report. Other optional data are suggested on page 20 but are intended only as a source for additional review if so desired by the staff.

Required Data Elements

1. History of department and forecast for subject matter

   This section is an overview of when the department got started, its staff and curricular growth or decline over the past four years, and a few statements on what the picture might look like in the future. Occupational programs should report current and projected curricular needs reflecting the employment market. One forecasting source for projecting demand of several academic disciplines and occupations is the computerized Eureka system available on-line in many college libraries or career centers.

2. Duplication of programs

   Both transfer and occupational programs are to include information about nearby institutions (e.g., 30 mile radius) which offer the same or similar training in the department. For example, where can a student get similar training? What are the differences in the programs, if any?

3. Enrollment Trends

   Data are gathered by examining previous records on early term enrollments per course and for the entire

department/program over the past few years. Also included are the student faculty ratio per course and the average WSCH (weekly student contact hours) for the department (total department enrollment multiplied by number of hours per week, divided by total faculty count). Usually such demographic data are already tabulated and available in instructional offices.

4. Departmental costs

With assistance from administrative personnel, the department is to determine the cost of operating their program for an academic year, including such elements as salaries, supplies, equipment and other budget items.

5. Characteristics and basic skill levels of students as compared with general student body

Determining student demographics (age, sex, ethnicity) for a department may be accomplished with a survey. Basic skill proficiencies will have to be obtained through an assessment office and/or from central data processing. Determine if standardized tests of writing, reading, or math have been given through an assessment process. If so, a departmental sample of student names (or social security numbers) may be drawn and their scores examined. If data processing has the capability, obtain the assessment scores of all current students who are taking a core course(s)

in the department. Occasionally a faculty member routinely gives a standardized reading or math test to students. Such procedure could be enlarged to include a random sample of students in several sections. The point is to collect data on the initial skill levels of students and, if possible, compare these students against the total student body.

6. Academic standards, grade achievement rates and retention

Information is to be collected from faculty on the number and type of classroom tests given per course, additional course requirements, and information indicating the general student performance necessary to earn A-D final grades. These methods are to be summarized in a statement on what it generally requires of a student to earn specific grades in each course (combined sections). Also give data on the total percentage of students earning each final grade by each course. Such grade data may be collected from faculty but often is readily available in a computerized grade analysis report found in the instructional office.

Retention rates for each course and for the department should also be available on computerized printouts. While a few students literally earn non-passing grades, such grades of "F" or "No-credit" are usually

counted against retention measures because many students stop attending a class without officially dropping the course. A "less-than-pure" but workable retention statistic is to report the percentage of students receiving passing grades (and earning units) out of the total who started (adjusting for post-registration adds, no-shows). These data are to be reported for each course and for the entire department. Another retention statistic to be reported by occupationally oriented programs is the percentage of students successfully finishing a program (or entering the related job market even short of full training) out of the total who started at some fixed point in time, e.g., a specific year.

7. Job placement data (occupational programs only) Occupational programs usually are required to report the percent of program "completers" who get positive oriented placement, at what salary level, and with what degree of personal satisfaction. Such summary data are also to be included in the self-evaluation report and aggregated by sex and ethnicity. If possible, compare placement data of program completers against other employees not receiving departmental training or receiving it elsewhere, e.g., Do departmentally trained students earn as much money as other employees not so trained? Finally, there is to be a

statement on job opportunity, upward mobility, and wage potential within the general occupational field that students are being prepared for.

8. Consumer opinion of program completers

Occupational programs are to include information from major employers of students on their level of satisfaction with the college's occupational program and its product (the quality of students they hire). What do prospective employers of students think of the department's entire operation? Also described are the composition, role and actual functioning of any program advisory committee.

In a similar manner, the community college's transfer oriented departments are to select a baccalaureate granting institution(s) where many of their community college transfers enroll. Sample their faculty with the same academic discipline (or the department chairperson) as to opinions toward the community college's department and the preparation of its major students for upper division work.

9. Opinion and subsequent performance of program graduates, graduated majors, or students who took core courses

Opinions of alumni are an integral part of program review. Each department needs to have a data collection system whereby one to four-year student

follow-ups by specific majors are possible. Such a college-wide data base would include a coding system for majors (e.g., student declaration and defined by core courses taken) which will enable later retrieval of student names, permanent addresses, and other useful information for the department. If such a system is not yet functional, each department needs to have its own follow-up process. One method is to keep a card file on every student who takes an advanced core course(s) and who declared the proper major at the time of filling out the card. These students can then be surveyed one to three years later not only on their opinions about the community college department but also self-statements about their performance, either at the baccalaureate institution or on the job. The point is to gather some alumni data.

10. Current student opinion of courses

A general statement is prepared about overall current student opinion toward the department, its courses and the quality of instruction. Various course evaluation forms may be examined for appropriateness in the department. Select approximately five to ten basic survey items and have all faculty members solicit student ratings in all their classes. This does not preclude having additional items for components not touched upon by the basic items. For convenience, it

is best to adapt such a rating questionnaire to a computer scoring answer sheet which will enable tallying all responses across all choices. Usually such answer sheets are restricted to a five-choice format for each item. Group the answer sheets by course and have them "scored" that way. Present summary data for each course by each item and for all courses combined.

11. Professional growth and achievement recognition of staff

A summary statement should be included in the report highlighting the professional growth of department members. Include a brief narration with examples of such activities over the past two to four years, as well as publications, awards, notable achievements and recognitions. Each faculty member should prepare a current resume using an agreed upon format. Include these in the appendix of the report.

12. Curriculum and textbooks

This section should address the various relationships between student skill levels and the department's curriculum/textbooks. In the appendix are placed all the official course outlines plus a listing of main required textbooks for each course. Assess the readability of the required textbooks for all entry-level courses. A section appearing in the main body of the

report should address how the curriculum and textbooks fit the general goals of the college and the basic skill levels of the department's students. In other words, what kind of student audience does the department's curriculum address itself to? Finally, include a section on how the department's courses articulate with feeder high schools, baccalaureate institutions, and job skills (for occupational programs).

13. Adequacy of support functions

Information should be gathered and a summary prepared regarding needs for support personnel, equipment, materials, space allocation and budget. In other words, document, justify and prioritize the needs.

Drawing Comparisons

Some of the required data on the previously mentioned thirteen items will have limited interpretive meaning without some longitudinal comparisons or equivalent college/departmental norms. Therefore, it is in the interest of each department to start establishing meaningful reference data. If comparision data are already available, include them in the self-evaluation report.

Optional Data Elements

Listed below are some suggested additional data elements (or commentary) that may be included in the self-evaluation report.

A. Efficiency of space utilization, e.g., room size to enrollment.

B. Opinions of personnel who affect student's program entry decision.

C. Clarity of instructor's classroom objectives.

D. Adequacy of procedures used to evaluate and revise curriculum.

E. Adequacy of procedures used to assess instruction.

F. Balance in faculty workload; extent of faculty involvement with program planning.

G. Value of program to society

H. Any additional data or collective statement the department wishes to make.

Summary

The prospect of global departmental/program evaluation is intriguing for it suggests a time of intense self-study and growth on a more specific level than heretofore done. Likewise, comprehensive review when done throughout the entire campus builds a foundation for campuswide accreditation and institutional goal setting. Such assessment is a big undertaking involving many people. The external evaluation team will have to be compensated for their costs. Likewise, "locals" on the team may be given some form of preferred assignment or relief from other obligations when

they are involved. The department chairperson is the logical choice of being given the task of organizing and preparing the department's self-evaluation report. Regardless of who gets the job, that person should be given some compensation--be it stipend, release time, or preferred assignment with relief from other academic obligations.

Finally, staff members are being asked to give much effort and time to data collection and intrepretation. Their efforts must be recognized, and they must be certain their self-evaluation report will not only be read but acted upon.

Table 1

Student Outcome Behavorial Objectives[1]

Goal: Improvement of Communication Skills

Objective 1. The students shall demonstrate the ability to speak competently.

Criteria: To achieve competency a student's speaking must:

A. recognize audience and purpose when giving an impromptu or planned response;
B. contain selected and organized material;
C. use effective eye contact, voice volume, rate of speech, visual aids and other delivery techniques;
D. be expressed in clear, conventional American English.

Objective 2. The students shall demonstrate the ability to read competently.

Criteria: To achieve competency in reading a student must:

A. be able to adjust the rate of reading to material and purpose for reading;
B. define words by examining context, by using a dictionary and by applying the root-affix method;
C. identify main ideas (stated or implied) and supporting details (major and minor) in selected readings;
D. distinguish among facts, opinions and inferences in selected readings;
E. correctly determine if readings show bias, or use persuasive devices.

Objective 3. The students shall demonstrate the ability to listen competently.

Criteria: To demonstrate competency in active listening to other people, a student must:

A. identify ways of overcoming internal and external barriers to listening (e.g., anger, noise);
B. identify main ideas and important details;
C. differentiate between fact and opinion, whether stated or implied;
D. demonstrate an understanding of a speaker's purpose and organization of material;
E. demonstrate an understanding of how tone of voice, stress on words, pauses and other factors including non-verbal ones, affect the reception of messages.

Table 1 (Continued)

Objective 4. The students shall demonstrate the ability to write competently.

Criteria: To achieve competency a student's writing must:

A. have a central idea, single thesis or theme which is supported throughout with facts or other information such as graphs, charts, pictures, tables and other visual aids;
B. contain an adequate amount of information;
C. be organized;
D. be consistent in tense and person;
E. use language appropriate to the audience and occasion;
F. observe the conventions of Edited American English in sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

---

[1]Modified from: A Core Curriculum Approach to General Education. Miami-Dade Community College, June 1981.

Table 2

Methods Used to Collect Data

Questionnaires	Follow-up studies
Locally designed inventories	Experimental studies
Proficiency tests	Correlational studies
Standardized tests or instruments	Archival records
Interviews	Rating scales
Observations	Expert Opinion

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

FEB 24 1984

8118 Math-Sciences Building
Los Angeles, California 90024